

Robert Bruce Langdon

AND

His Descendants

BY

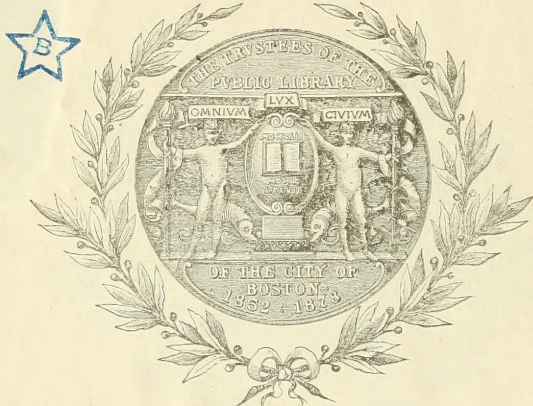
Caroline Langdon Brooks

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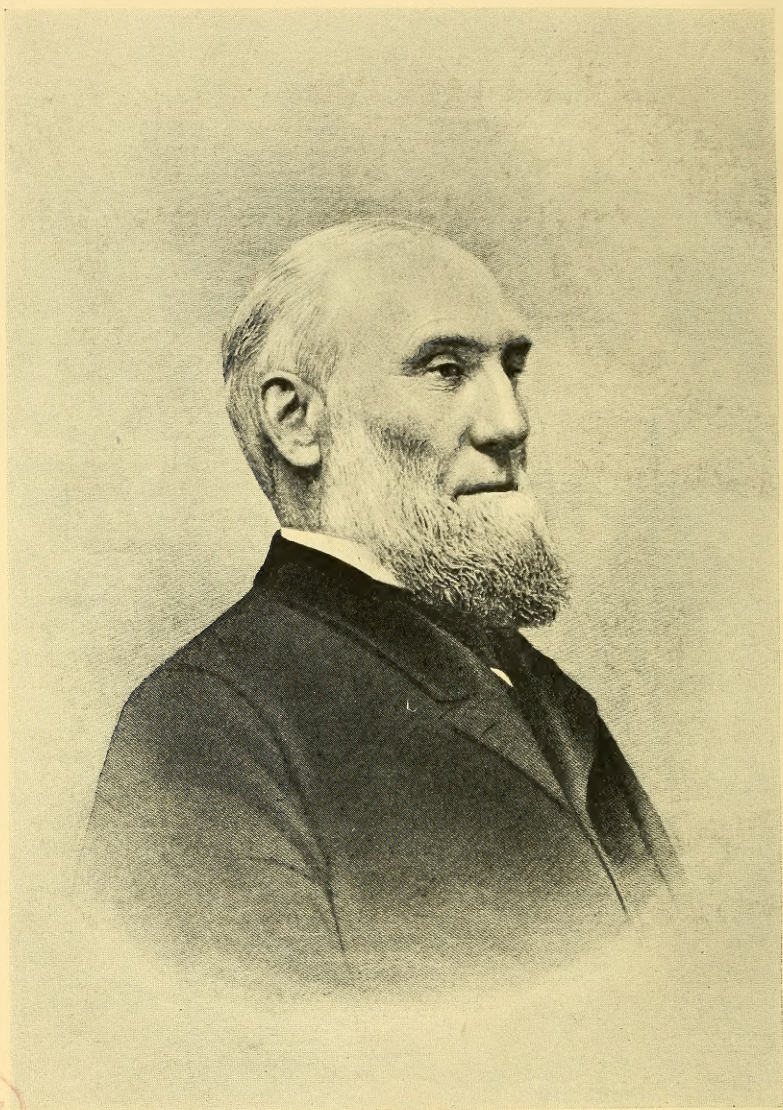
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Robert B. Laugel

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Caroline Langdon Brooks

THE MILLER PUBLISHING CO.
MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.
1926

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"He was one of the noblest of God's creation—an honest man in every sense. His word was always as good as his bond, whether in business, friendship or politics."

To
My Brother CAVOUR
THIS BOOK
IS AFFECTIONATELY
DEDICATED

ROBERT BRUCE LANGDON AND HIS DESCENDANTS



ROBERT BRUCE
LANGDON,
pioneer railroad
builder and one of
the outstanding
men of Minne-
sota, came of that old sturdy New
England stock whose descendants
were the embodiment of honor, in-
telligence and industry.

Mr. Langdon was a descendant
of George Langton, who came
to this country in 1636, settled
in Wethersfield, Connecticut, re-
moved to Springfield, Massachu-
setts, in 1646, and died in North-
ampton, Massachusetts, in 1676.
The name was originally Langton,
as proven by George Langton's sig-
nature in the history of Spring-
field, Massachusetts. His line of

descent from George Langton is as follows: *Robert^s, Seth^r, Jr., Seth^s, Sr., Captain Noah^s, Ebenezer^r, Joseph^s, John^s, George^r*. There is a tradition in the family that this branch is connected with the Langtons of Lincolnshire, England. His grandfather and great-grandfather on both maternal and paternal lines served in the Revolutionary War. Lieutenant-Colonel Miles Powell and Captain Noah Langdon aided in the capture of Burgoyne at Saratoga, New York.

Mr. Langdon, the son of Seth and Laura (Squire) Langdon, was born in New Haven, Vermont, November 24, 1826, and was brought up in a knowledge of hard work on his father's farm. He received his education in the academies of New Haven and Castleton, Vermont.

On February 29, 1859, he married, in New Haven, Vermont, Sarah Smith, born February 28, 1839. She was the daughter of Dr. Horatio Augustus Smith and Jerusha

Reeve Bell. Dr. Smith's ancestry was English, he being a descendant of Deacon Edmund Rice, of Sudbury, Massachusetts, and John Willoughby, of Billerica, Massachusetts. He was one of the oldest and most respected practitioners in Vermont.

AS A RAILROAD BUILDER



FROM 1848 to the time of his death, July 24, 1895, Mr. Langdon was engaged in the construction of railroads, and a full account of his life would almost comprise a history of railroad building in the United States during that period.

At the age of twenty he worked with the engineers of the Rutland & Burlington Railroad, which was being built through New Haven, Vermont.

The following year he was employed by Selah Chamberlain, who was a prominent railroad builder at that time. The business relations and friendship formed then lasted throughout their lives. He was made superintendent by Mr. Cham-

berlain, and went west with him to complete certain contracts in Ohio. Later he went to Wisconsin, where he worked on the completion of the Milwaukee & Prairie du Chien Railroad. He also superintended the building of the Illinois Central Railroad from Kankakee to Urbana, Illinois, in 1853.

As there was a lull in railroad building at this time Mr. Langdon became interested with President Nash, of the National Exchange Bank of Milwaukee in starting a stock farm. This plan, however, was soon given up and he was awarded his first contract with the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad to fence that road from Fond du Lac to Minnesota Junction. When this work was completed he took a contract with the Milwaukee & La Crosse Railroad to fence that road from Horicon to Portage City. This work was finished in 1857, just as the road failed. After paying most of his obligations contracted

in this work, he was left without a dollar.

Soon afterward he became superintendent of the flour mill in Horicon, Wisconsin, which was owned by his brother-in-law, J. H. Conkey. At the end of the season he was able to pay off what was left of his indebtedness. He then removed to St. Paul, Minnesota, and arrived just as the state had passed the famous land grant.

The first ground broken for a railroad in Minnesota in 1858, the year Minnesota was admitted as a state, was under the direction of Mr. Langdon. He took subcontracts for grading, masonry and bridge work on the Great Northern Railroad, at that time called the St. Paul & Pacific Railroad.

In 1859 Mr. Langdon went to Indiana, where he spent one season in the construction of the roadway for the Logansport, Peoria & Oquawka Railroad. His next contract was in Mississippi, just before

the Civil War. The incidents attending his work there would furnish interesting reading in these days of safety and peace. His contract on the Mobile & Ohio Railroad was attended with considerable danger. In May, 1861, he was advised by prominent Southerners to send his wife home, as a matter of safety. Mrs. Langdon left immediately for Vermont. Many of the contractors on the Mobile & Ohio Railroad abandoned their work and left the country, but he finished his work, as well as much belonging to the deserting contractors, and thus did all the bridge work and much of the grading and track laying. His work was completed in June, 1861, and before he left the war was well under way. He was obliged to leave all his railroad outfit in Corinth, Miss. He carried home with him to New Haven, Vermont, Webster's Dictionary and a small amount of money. His oldest child, Cavour, was born

that summer in the same room in which his father and grandfather were born. Cavour was the fourth generation to live in the old farm house, it having been built by his great-grandfather about 1790.

In the fall of 1861 Mr. Langdon removed to Horicon, Wisconsin, and became identified with the Milwaukee & La Crosse Railroad. He was given charge of the construction train, and three months later was made roadmaster of a division of that road. He resigned to accept the position of fuel agent on the Chicago, Alton & St. Louis Railroad, which at that time had in its employ a group of men who since have become prominent throughout the country, among them Marvin Hewitt, Sr. He remained eighteen months with the railroad company. Later he removed to Mendota, formerly called St. Peters, the oldest town in Minnesota, at the junction of the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers. In

1863 he was engaged by the Minnesota and Central Railroad, afterwards the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul, to build the trestle and stone piers on the bridge across the Minnesota River from Fort Snelling to Mendota. It was at Mendota that Lieutenant Pike made the first treaty with the Sioux Indians for a reservation for Fort Snelling.

Mr. Langdon lived with his family nearly three years, from 1863 to 1866, in the Sibley house, formerly known as the Sibley Mansion, now owned by the D. A. R. and preserved as an historic landmark. It was the first stone house built in Minnesota in 1835, and is now called "The Mount Vernon of the West." It was said that "all of the railroad men camped with him, and Langdon never took a cent of pay."

Mrs. Langdon's mother died during the winter of 1865 in the Sibley house. Bishop Whipple officiated at her funeral, being a warm personal friend of the family. The

services were delayed three weeks on account of the heavy snowfall that winter.

The life of Mr. Langdon in Minneapolis was a part of the phenomenal growth and prosperity of the young metropolis at the headwaters of the Mississippi. Railroad building had ceased at this time, and during the next year, 1866, Mr. Langdon built the great water power canal in the river at this point for the Minneapolis Mill Company, on which stand sixteen flour mills and many other manufacturing plants. He also built the first Washburn Flour Mill, called Washburn B Mill, the First National Bank and other buildings, using the limestone that was taken from the canal. Many of these buildings are still in use.

In 1868 he was first assistant chief of the Volunteer Fire Department of Minneapolis. He built bridges across the Mississippi River at Hastings, St. Paul and St.

Cloud, and bridged the Minnesota River at Mendota and Chaska. His business grew from small proportions to an immense industry, employing thousands of men when in operation.

Langdon & Company built over seven thousand miles of railroad in the United States and Canada. A. H. Linton became a member of the firm in 1870. In 1872 D. C. Shepard became a member of the company. In 1882 Langdon, Shepard & Company constructed the Canadian Pacific Railroad from Oak Lake, Manitoba, to Calgary, Alberta. In fifteen months, six hundred and seventy-five miles of track were completed, and in a single day in the course of the contract, six miles and six hundred feet of track were laid. He was vice president and director of the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railroad, and vice president and director of the Minneapolis, Sault Ste. Marie & Atlantic Railroad.

HIS PUBLIC SERVICE



MR. LANGDON belonged to the Whig party until 1861, when he became connected with the Republican party. At the general election in 1872 he was elected to represent the district consisting of the northern part of Hennepin County and a part of the City of Minneapolis in the State Senate. His colleagues from Minneapolis were John S. Pillsbury, Levi Butler, J. B. Gillfillan and C. A. Pillsbury. He took his seat in the Senate in 1873. He held the office of Senator for twelve years and during an extra session in October, 1881. This session was called by Governor John S. Pillsbury to act upon the adjustment of the state railroad bonds and remove

the stain of repudiation from the fair name of the state. He was a vigorous supporter of every effort made for the settlement of the case, although he had long advocated a full payment of the obligation. The bill was passed.

He took an active part as a legislator, and was distinguished for his close attention to the interests of the community which he represented and for his sound and practical ideas. He served upon the most important standing committees, such as elections, railroads, state prison, retrenchment and reform. He was pre-eminently a business member, insisting upon economy in public service and strict accountability in public office.

He was the choice of his party for the same office in 1888, but was beaten by his Democratic opponent by only a few votes, this being due to the Farmers' Alliance landslide of that year. He was a delegate to the Republican national conven-

tions in Cincinnati in 1876, and was the only delegate from Minnesota to vote for Rutherford B. Hayes. He was a delegate to Chicago in 1888, and used his influence in securing the national convention for Minneapolis in June, 1892. He was chairman of two committees and a member of the general presidential committee. Mr. Langdon never had a competitor at a convention, receiving his nomination for delegate by acclamation.

In November, 1884, Alexander McDonald, DeWitt Clinton Wheeler and Robert B. Langdon were appointed by President Arthur as Commissioners to examine and report on the recently completed sections of the Northern Pacific Railroad between the Columbia River and Satas, in Montana. While executing this commission they were snowed in for twenty-two days near Portland, Oregon.

OTHER ACTIVITIES



R. LANGDON was connected with many business enterprises in the Northwest, aside from railroad building. In 1876, upon the failure of Gibson & Tyler, he was made the assignee. He placed Mr. William G. Northup in charge of the business, which later was reorganized and became known as the North Star Woolen Mill Company. He was president of the Minneapolis Syndicate, a corporation which built the Syndicate Block which turned the retail trade from Washington Avenue to Nicollet Avenue. He was interested in the wholesale grocery trade, being a partner of George R. Newell & Co., the largest wholesale grocery in the state.

He was one of the directors of the Twin City Stock Yards of New Brighton; vice president of the City Bank; one of the organizers of the German-American Bank; director of the Terminal Elevator Co. and of the Belt Railway, connecting the stock yards at New Brighton with the interurban systems of railroad. He was a prominent Mason, and president of the Masonic Temple Association, a director of the Minneapolis Trust Company, president of the Minneapolis Club, president of the Vermont Association, a trustee of Lakewood Cemetery Association, and life member of the Historical Society. He was active in promoting the building of the Public Library and was one of the directors of the Society of Fine Arts when it was first organized. He was a vestryman of St. Mark's Episcopal Church from 1870 to the time of his death.

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS



R. LANGDON'S business relations were marked by strict integrity, honesty, and proper regard for the rights of others. He had a large acquaintance with men of national reputation in this country, and his influence was widespread and potent, not only in molding the business and political destinies of his city and state, but in the counsels and national conventions of his party. Among the pioneers who constituted the inner circle there was a great bond of union between those who had worked together to build up the city and to share the struggles and privations that always attend the carving of the commonwealth out of the rough material of a new country.

Mr. Langdon was a man of large, robust physique, and possessed a personality that was both magnetic and impressive. His many charities and benevolences in affliction and distress were extended with liberality and judgment, and entirely without ostentation. The sterling qualities of his character were such as to endear him to men in all walks of life. He died in his sixty-ninth year and was mourned by a large circle of devoted and sincere friends. His name has been honored by having two towns named for him, namely, Langdon, North Dakota, and Langdon, Minnesota.

HIS FAMILY



RS. LANGDON passed away September 11, 1911. She was a woman with great courage and strength of character, necessary qualities to fit her for the strenuous life in the pioneer days in Minnesota. She was known and revered for her many charities. She was vice president of the Stevens Avenue Home for Children and Aged Women for many years. She was a life member of the Society of Fine Arts and a member of the board of directors in 1891.

Three children survive this union, two children having died in infancy.

- 1 CAVOUR¹ SMITH LANGDON, b. in New Haven, Vermont, Sep-

tember 11, 1861; married in Minneapolis, Minn., December 27, 1893, Mabel Shaw, b. April 17, 1868, in Minneapolis, Minn., daughter of Judge John M. and Ellen (Elliott) Shaw.

Children, born in Minneapolis, Minn.:

- i. *Elizabeth*¹⁰ *Langdon*, b. February 2, 1898; d. May 15, 1907.
- ii. *Mabel*¹⁰ *Ellen Langdon*, b. June 2, 1899; married in Minneapolis, Minn., April 27, 1921, Howard Ives McMillan, b. August 5, 1897, son of John D. and Grace Ellen (Ives) McMillan.

Children, born in Minneapolis, Minn.:

1. *Cavour*¹¹ *Langdon McMillan*, b. January 22, 1922.
2. *Elizabeth*¹¹ *Langdon McMillan*, b. February 21, 1924.

2 MARTHA⁹ AURELIA LANGDON, b. in Mendota, Minn., September 15, 1863; married in Minneapolis, Minn., October 5, 1886, Hiram Calvin Truesdale, b. February 8, 1860, son of Dr. Calvin and Charlotte

(Haynes) Truesdale of Rock Island, Ill.

Children, born in Minneapolis, Minn.:

- i. *Sarah¹⁰ Helen Truesdale*, b. September 7, 1887; married in Minneapolis, Minn., June 23, 1914, Dr. Angus Washburn Morrison, b. in Minneapolis, Minn., July 18, 1883, son of Clinton and Julia (Washburn) Morrison.

Children, born in Minneapolis, Minn.:

1. *Clinton¹¹ Morrison*, b. March 26, 1915.
 2. *Anne¹¹ Morrison*, b. January 2, 1917.
 3. *Angus¹¹ Truesdale Morrison*, b. February 13, 1919.
 4. *John¹¹ Van Derlip Morrison*, b. June 1, 1922.
- ii. *Cavour¹⁰ Langdon Truesdale*, b. February 3, 1891; married in London, England, July 12, 1922, Isabel Mary Hardie, b. in Equiqui, Chili, South America, August 29, 1894, daughter of William and Mary (Clayton) Hardie.

Children, born in Minneapolis, Minn.:

1. *Martha¹¹ May Truesdale*, b. April 1, 1923.
2. *Mary¹¹ Helen Truesdale*, b. August 2, 1924.

3 CAROLINE⁹ BELL LANGDON, b. in Minneapolis, Minn., June 30, 1866; married in Minneapolis, Minn., January 11, 1888, William Frederick Brooks, b. in ^{Battle Creek} Minneapolis, Minn., March 1, 1863, son of Frederick William and Annie (Oakley) Brooks.

Children, born in Minneapolis, Minn.:

- i. Robert¹⁰ Langdon Brooks, b. December 15, 1889; married in Minneapolis, Minn., October 27, 1915, Katharine Lawler, b. December 15, 1889, in St. Paul, Minn., daughter of John and Ella (Sturgis) Lawler.

Children, born in Minneapolis, Minn.:

1. Caroline¹¹ Langdon Brooks, b. August 4, 1916.
2. Robert¹¹ Langdon Brooks, Jr., b. November 4, 1917.
3. John¹¹ Lawler Brooks, b. December 6, 1919.
4. William¹¹ Pennington Brooks, b. October 30, 1922.
5. Glenn¹¹ Sturgis Brooks, b. Nov. 14, 1926.

4 FRANCES^o GERTRUDE LANGDON,
b. in Minneapolis, Minn., Sep-
tember 17, 1869; d. February 8,
1870.

5 LINTON^o SHEPARD LANGDON, b.
in Minneapolis, Minn., April
11, 1872; d. July 26, 1872.

The following Books have been consulted:

The Biographical Dictionary and Portrait Gallery of Representative Men of Chicago and Minnesota Cities and World's Columbian Exposition. 1892.

History of Minneapolis, by Isaac Atwater. 1893.

Progressive Men of Minnesota, by Dr. Marion D. Shutter and J. C. McLain. 1897.

History and Biography of Minneapolis and Hennepin County, Minnesota. 1914.

Miscellaneous data collected by Caroline Langdon Brooks. 1926.

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